



Wishing you a Christmas filled with joy...  
a New Year filled with happiness.

Charlotte & Joe

MRS. CHARLOTTE MORO  
40 FAIRVIEW ST.  
CARBONDALE, PA. 18407



This card  
from  
Charlotte  
and Joe  
is very  
beautiful;  
possibly  
the  
most  
beautiful/  
elegant  
that I  
received  
this year.

Mr. Robert Powell  
To C'dale Historical Society  
P.O. Box 151  
Carbonale, Pa. 18407

## British Treasure Houses' Heroes

By PAULA DEITZ

**A**LTHOUGH much ado has been made of the aristocratic patrons whose country house furnishings are on view until April 13 in Washington at the National Gallery of Art in "Treasure Houses of Britain," the real heroes responsible for the survival of the contents of these homes are the time-honored British housekeepers and their staffs.

As the largest lender to the exhibition, the British National Trust oversaw 36 of the more than 200 country houses represented in the show. Their housekeepers have the more difficult mandate of trying to preserve the trust's possessions in perpetuity. The National Trust owns 187 houses that receive about eight million visitors a year.

The trust has been emphasizing preventive conservation for the last 10 years. At the head of this effort is Sheila Stainton, who in 1977 was appointed the first Housekeeper of the National Trust. She makes annual house calls on at least 50 of the 120 trust properties with furnishings her department oversees, and four assistant housekeepers visit the rest. She

### Housekeepers are the preservers.

recently recounted how she and Hermione Sandwith, Deputy to the Surveyor of Conservation, came to codify the dying art of British housekeeping in a handbook, "The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping," first published in 1984 (Penguin reissue, 1985, \$9.95, paperback).

"My favorite time for seeing a trust house," Miss Stainton says, "is not on a summer day, when I may spot a few felloes heels leaving their marks on old wood floors or observe textiles being faded by strong afternoon light, but on a quiet winter day when the house has been properly put to bed and no further harm can come to it for that year." Ideally, the furniture is in slipcovers, color-coded by room, and the chandeliers, cleaned every other year, are covered in muslin bags. Two basic tenets she espouses are: "The more objects are moved, the more they are damaged" and "Cleaning and polishing can be overdone." Miss Stainton is against the loving buff.

"When I began traveling to the houses as a textile conservator in the mid-70s," she explains, "I and other conservators discovered there was no uniform direction in housekeeping practices, for as the older generation of housekeepers, who were part of the staffs of the trust-acquired properties, began to retire, there was no one to pass on the secrets."

But there were still a few staff members left like Eva Boulter of Bourton in Wiltshire, chiefly known for its 18th-century landscape gardens. Her floor-polishing cloths impregnated with kerosene and vinegar they in time bring equal fame to the house. (Six 24-inch squares cut from worn blankets are soaked in a mixture of one-half pint each of vinegar and kerosene. They collect dust and leave floors shiny.)

At Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, the late-19th-century house built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, the housekeeper before it became a trust house in 1977 passed on to Gwyneth Morgan, the trust's housekeeper there, the exemplary household practices that made Waddesdon a model. A demonstration study day of the Rothschild housekeeping methods was held in 1977, and it was upheld from then on.

"Also," Miss Stainton adds, "we adopted museum conservation techniques and simplified them for household use." No miracle cleaners, just common sense enlightened by scientific knowledge.

Although the 17 chapters of the manual cover such subjects as floors, furniture, glass, metalwork and ceramics, as well as sculpture, textiles, books and musical instruments on the scale of country house life, the details can be applied to more modest homes. Even urban apartment dwellers can benefit from the discussion of selecting and cleaning the "lowly doormat—the first line of defense in keeping dust out of the house."

In vacuuming upholstery and drapes, Miss Stainton suggests, "It is the suction that cleans, not the pressure, so for best results just float the vacuum over the fabric." The dust should first be loosened with a plastic fly sweater.

In the appendix on equipment and materials, the book recommends the National Trust's own furniture wax to treat furniture once a year. And indispensable, it would appear, is the firm but soft hog-hair fitch brush for cleaning furniture crevices.

Gervase Jackson-Stops, the trust's architectural adviser and the curator of the Washington exhibit, edited the manual and supplied charming quotations to introduce each chapter.

When the exhibition closes and the houses reclaim the borrowed furnishings after the long winter hibernation, they will again appear lived in, even poised for a splendid country-house weekend, and Miss Stainton and her department will be on guard, as she says, "to look after our houses like a prudent housekeeper."

Christmas presents given  
in 1986 by SRP:

1) to Mom:

- 5 - homemade gingerbread cookies (gingerbread man, star, Santa Claus, scalloped circle, large scalloped circle - the Margaret Russell cookie cutter) - Cookies baked at Giff course on 12/23/86

↑  
When I  
read this  
article in  
the NY Times  
(possibly  
the WSJ),  
I decided  
to buy  
for OWP/HAP  
"The National  
Trust Manual  
of Housekeeping."

- a pint of SRP-made Cranberry jelly
- a mounted photograph of a Russell's decoy sign that hung on a tree in Whippany, NJ, at a Carbonale-day Celebration held there this fall

- a pint of SRP-grown + made (using mom's recipe) Sweet Brutter pickles
- 2) to Dad
- SRP-made 5 gingerbread cookies
  - 5 pounds of niger seed (for finches)
  - 5 pounds of SRP grown (in 1985) sunflower seeds